

FY22 CM Pool Budget Amendment #2

Co-sponsors: Council Members Kitchen, Alter, and Ellis

Workforce First Program for People Experiencing Homelessness

SD23: Economic Opportunity & Affordability, Health & Environment

Workforce First Program

[Workforce First](#) (WFF) is a part-time work opportunity created by [The Other Ones Foundation](#) (TOOF) for individuals experiencing homelessness to assist with encampment abatement in public parks and open spaces. The program is a “win-win” for the community: people experiencing homelessness have regular employment, job training, support services, and assistance with finding housing while the city receives much-needed help with encampment cleanup in our parks and open spaces.

Over the past three years, Austin Public Health has collaborated with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department Watershed Protection Department, and Austin Resource Recovery to fund Workforce First.

Workforce First Crews

- The program’s current operation includes three rotating crews that perform encampment cleanups and vegetative management throughout the city under the supervision of TOOF and PARD staff.
- This budget request is intended to add capacity to the Workforce First program to complete funding for an **additional work crew** through the Watershed Protection Department and the Drainage Utility Fee. **WPD has agreed to this increase** and is looking forward to utilizing the additional crew that would employ 7 clients, working 5 days per week. The funding request also includes one Supportive Employment Specialist (SES) to provide job training, one case manager and one operations manager who can oversee multiple work crews.

Table 1. FY22 Funding Proposal

City Department	FY20 Funding	FY21 Funding	FY22 Funding	Total Funding Request
Parks and Recreation	\$105,000	\$108,082	\$108,082	No change
Public Health	\$245,000	\$395,000*	\$295,000	No change
Watershed Protection	\$70,000	\$363,245**	\$538,245	\$141,167 [WPD agrees with increase]
Austin Resource Recovery	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	No change
Total Fund	\$720,000	\$1,166,327	\$1,241,327	
FY22 Request				\$141,167

**Includes one-time funding of \$100,000 from APH in February 2021.*

Source: Austin Public Health and The Other Ones Foundation

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Workforce First Program: Innovative Approach

- Employment opportunities are combined with highly individualized case management.
- Assistance is provided in obtaining vital records and filling out housing applications.
- TOOF also fills a crucial role as a social network provider where folks are welcome to clean up after the day's work at TOOF's headquarters and spend down time together as part of a supportive community.

Table 2. Workforce First Crew Breakdown

Item	FY22 Request
Crew	\$112,500
Case Manager	\$55,594
Supportive Employment Specialist	\$55,594
Operations Manager	\$65,000
Direct Client Assistance	\$8,012
General Operating Expenses	\$19,467
Total Crew Cost	\$316,167

Workforce First Services & Accomplishments

- Operated a day shelter for a full year that offered services such as shower facilities, laundry, day sleep, personal device charging and MHC and EAT programs to respond to COVID-19. In 2019-2020, they provided 4,400 showers and 6,500 lunches.
- Grew funding base to include foundations, recurring donation group, and more consistent community fundraising events.
- Hired six people experiencing homelessness as full-time staff.

Workforce First: Track Record of Success

- The current Workforce First operations include three rotating crews with seven individuals. Previously, the crews were only operating on the southern portion of Lady Bird Lake, but the FY 2020-2021 funding enabled an expansion of their services city-wide.
- This expansion allowed the Workforce First crews to assist with encampment abatements for three collaborating city departments – Parks and Recreation, Watershed Protection, and Austin Resource Recovery. The crews have performed consistent, rapid response times to trash accumulation.
- Encampment cleanups are just one of the several services the Workforce First crews can respond to; other services include home repair, pest treatment, and apartment cleaning of subsidized housing for over 70 units in 2019-2020.
- The Other Ones Foundation, with the Workforce First program, continues to innovate in providing workforce solutions, case management services, and resources to successfully reintegrate folks back into permanent housing.
- The following are program successes from October 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021:
 - **\$309,480 in** earned income paid to people experiencing homelessness
 - **367,334** pounds of trashed moved out of green spaces in Austin
 - **77** clients graduated program to full-time employment and/or housing
 - **208** clients served
 - The current year of WFF is on track to be the most successful year of WFF thus far.